



Giving back to the language community: lessons from the Kiowa and Ojibwe peoples

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Introduction

- Due to different levels of endangerment, the state of documentation, and past revitalization efforts, language communities demonstrate markedly different needs.
- These needs should directly inform how a field linguist gives back to the community.
- Plans for giving back start with asking the community directly.
- In this presentation:
 - What does this process look like?
 - What can ANYONE do during fieldwork to help? (i.e. someone who is not a full time field linguist, has primary interests in theoretical questions, etc.)
 - Case Study: Kiowa and Saulteaux Ojibwe

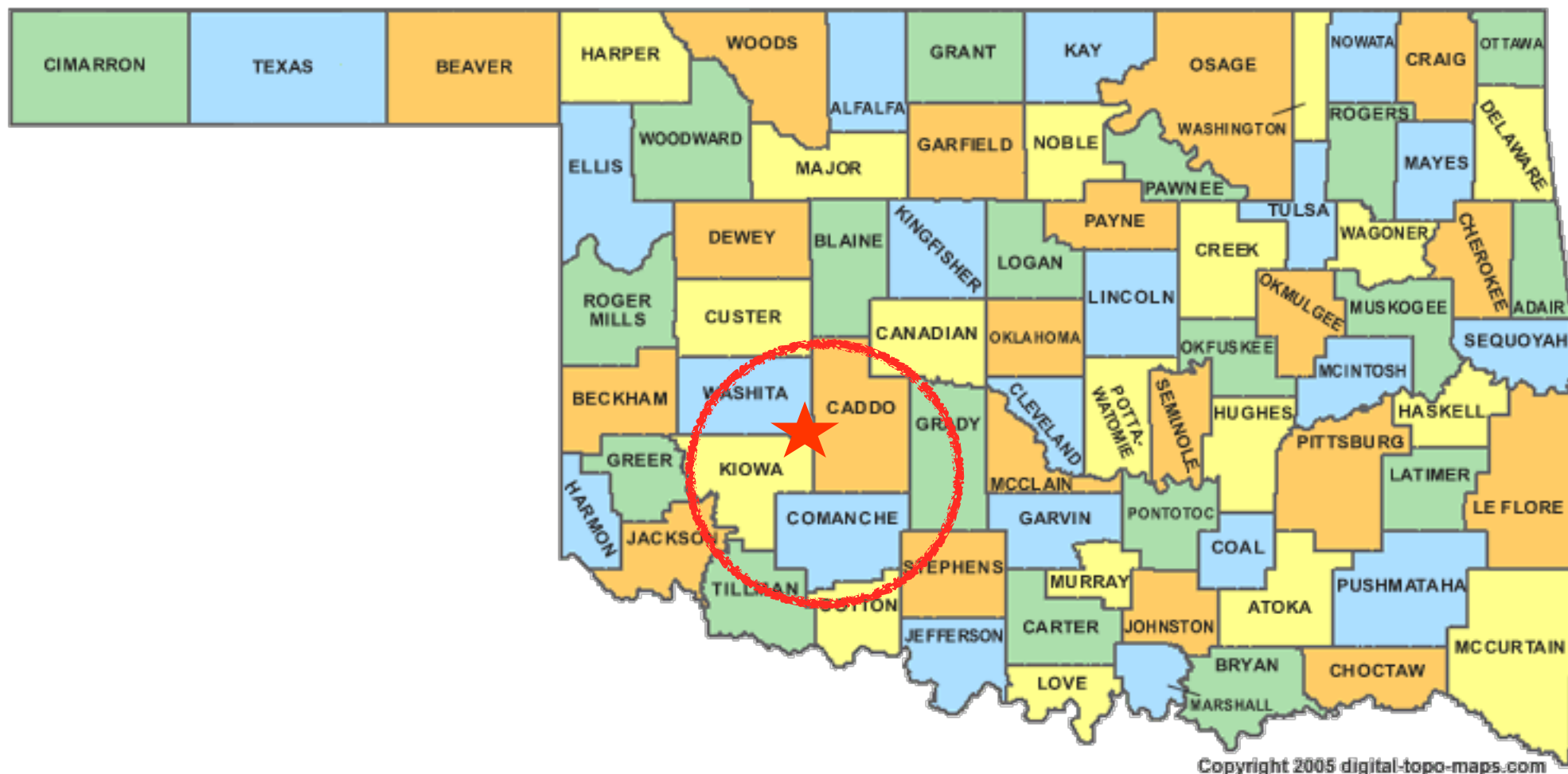
Outline

- Kiowa
 - The Community
 - The State of the Language
- Saulteaux Ojibwe
 - The Community
 - The State of the Language
- The Two Communities' Needs
- Possible Methods Moving Forward



The Kiowa Community (Southwestern Oklahoma)

- Over 12,000 members as of 2000 census (Caddo, Kiowa, and Comanche counties)
- No reservation, but Kiowa Tribal Complex is located in Carnegie, OK
- Includes an elder center (AOA), headstart pre-school program, history museum, food distribution center, and forms the hub of all tribal politics and government affairs



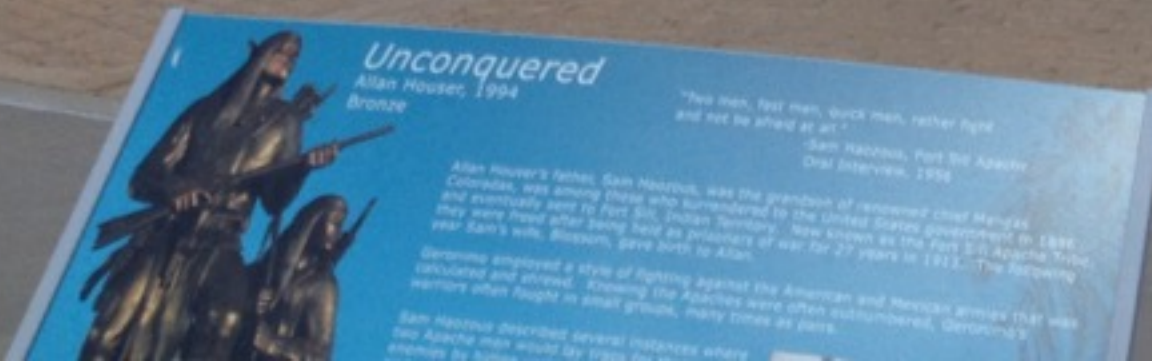
The State of the Kiowa Language

- Tanoan Language (UNESCO rating: “severely endangered”)
- In the 2000 census, 865 people claimed to speak Kiowa
- Recent work estimated the number of native speakers to be somewhere between a few dozen and 100 speakers (e.g. Adger et al. 2009, Linn 2011, McKenzie 2012, Cruz 2013)
- Local administrators estimate only 10 native speakers are left today. Most of those speakers are nearing 90 years old.
- Younger Kiowa people have little knowledge of the language, sometimes only knowing a few words or songs.

What is it like today?

- Kiowa has not been used conversationally since the '80s
- Little to no public access to recordings of Kiowa
- Only complete dictionary is from the 1920s (Harrington)
- Partial online dictionary falls victim to inconsistent transcriptions due to no standard orthography
- Most recordings and notes are difficult to access
- Tribal politics often sidelines revitalization efforts

Oklahoma Historical Society





CUY AULGA (cû-yàul-gà), n. - hydrophobia.
It is believed the disease
originates with the wolf fami-
ly; hence, the word.

Parker McKenzie Collection

Language Revitalization Efforts

- Several attempts but minimal impact
- **1970s-1980s:** Elders compile education materials, classes held, but participation and interest diminished
- **1990s-present:** Kiowa taught in certain High Schools and Universities (no standard orthography)
- **2000s:** The Kiowa Early Education program has implemented Kiowa vocabulary into instruction (e.g. days of the week, animal names) but without a resident elder in the classroom
- **Present:** Weekly drum circle to teach young men ceremonial song lyrics. Partial online dictionary.
- **Future:** Kiowa Museum awarded a grant for a multi-side education grant (certified teachers + resident elders across several counties)

Powwow (Drum Circle Singers Group)





The Saulteaux Community (Manitoba)

- Ojibwe is one of the largest indigenous populations in North America (ten of thousands)
- Saulteaux Ojibwe is a dialect spoken in southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan (Western Ojibwe, Plains Ojibwe) - My consultants come from the Lake Winnipeg area
- No central government, but smaller band offices, community centers, and reserves



The Ojibwe Language

- Algonquian Language
- Estimates of up to 80,000 native speakers across dialects
- Numerous dialects differing at virtually every level of linguistic structure (Valentine 1994, 2001)
- UNESCO rates dialects from “vulnerable” to “severely endangered”
- Saulteaux Ojibwe is one of the least studied dialects

The State of Sauteaux Ojibwe

- Current estimate of up to 10,000 native speakers
- Children are no longer acquiring the language (some northern Ontario dialects fair better)
- The majority of Sauteaux Ojibwe speakers are over the age of 40

What's it like today?

- Some reserves in the area have no native speakers left (e.g. Brokenhead Ojibwe Nation) while others still have an active elder community (e.g. Roseau River Anishnaabe First Nation)
- Reserves further north in the interlake area have much more active speaker communities due to isolation (Berens River, Blood Bay)
- In the city of Winnipeg, Ojibwe people are welcome at multiple indigenous community centers and Indian & Metis Friendship Centers. There are also teaching and cultural groups affiliated with the local universities.

Thunderbird House

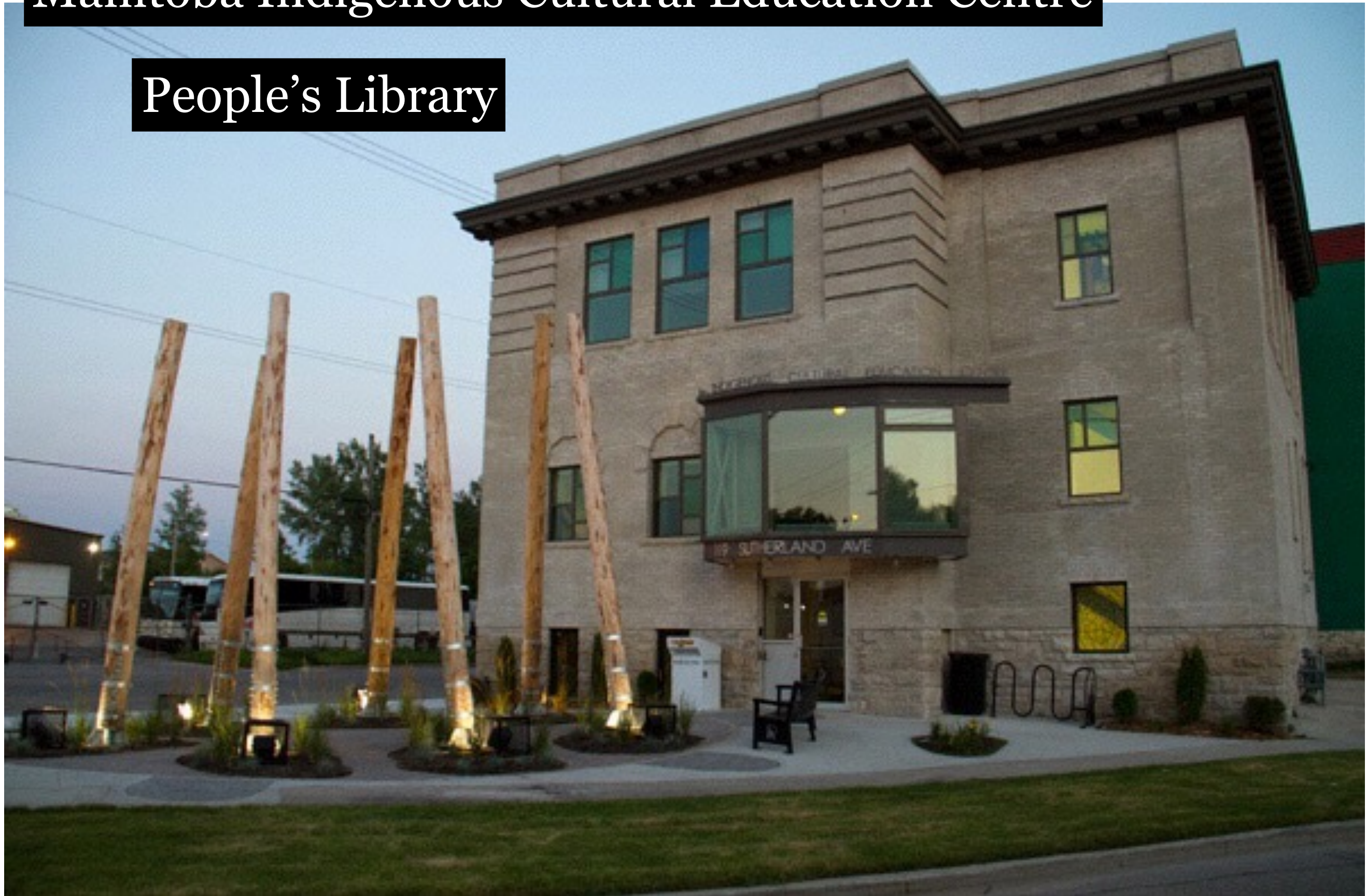


Active Saulteaux Revitalization Efforts

- Language Immersion Camps and Schools (e.g. Isaac Brock School's Kindergarten program in Winnipeg)
- Active Ojibwe education programs at (primary, middle, and high) schools and universities using standard orthography (e.g. Hogue et al. 1975, Johnston 1978, Nichols & Nyholm 1979, 1986, White 1983, 1988, Kewaquado 1989, Beachamp & Boulanger 1995)
- Some speakers are going back to university in order to obtain a teaching certification
- Active linguistic and anthropological research underway by Saulteaux speakers (e.g. Roger Roulette's personal histories project with the People's Library)

Manitoba Indigenous Cultural Education Centre

People's Library



Asking Each Community

- Though I planned on giving back to each community, I wanted to remain open to the exact method.
- In order to ask such a question, you need to be welcomed and trusted.
- Give back and be transparent in the moment:
 - cultural gift (fruit)
 - immediate copies of all recordings (no secrets)
- Once rapport is built, it's possible to ask the speakers what they think the community really needs.



Ernest, 79 years old

“If there was a dictionary with the sounds, too, I could die... I’m one of the last ones who knows how you’re supposed to pronounce things, and it will be lost forever without something like that.”

Requests to Add to Current Materials

- Little phonological research to inform curriculum
- Dialect-Specific dictionary and grammar
- Better understanding of Dialectal structure



Possible Methods Moving Forward

- Not all researchers can devote their entire career to the documentation and revitalization of a single language.
- What *can* we do? Even if we're primarily interested in non-documentation questions.
- **SHARE** (Kiowa)
 - Give copies of all materials you create and use (especially those hard to access) directly to the community (e.g. a museum, library, or community center).
- **COLLABORATE** (Saulteaux)
 - Work with the native community in the production and dissemination of the research (e.g. co-authoring papers, presentations, and grants), bringing skills (and data) to the table of ongoing projects.
(e.g., Mannix et al. 2015, Brooke Lillehaugen p.c.)

Thank You!

- **Ah ho** and **Miigwech** to the Kiowa and Saulteaux communities for welcoming me and teaching me about their culture and language!
- Special thanks to the native speakers who met with me!
- Thanks to Jacobs Research Fund and University of Delaware for funding my fieldwork in both communities!

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